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ABSTRACT

This book assesses the current condition and direction of the American public library. It considers the challenges and opportunities presented by new electronic technologies, changing public policy, fiscal realities, and cultural trends. The authors draw on site visits and interviews conducted across the country, as well as extensive reading of reports, surveys, and other documents, combining a scholarly, humanistic, and historical approach to public libraries with a clear-eyed look at their problems and prospects and their role in the emerging national information infrastructure. Chapters include: (1) The Mission: Consensus and Contradiction; (2) The Institution: Governance and Funding; (3) The National Perspective: The Federal Role in Library Infrastructure; (4) The National Perspective: The National Information Infrastructure; and (5) The Institution: Services, Technology, and Communities. An appendix lists sites visited and interviewees. Contains chapter notes and an index. (AEF)

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